



Molecules of Emotion: The Science Behind Mind-Body Medicine

Candace B. Pert, Deepak Chopra (Foreword by)

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Why do we feel the way we feel? How do our thoughts and emotions affect our health? Are our bodies and minds distinct from each other or do they function together as parts of an interconnected system?

In her groundbreaking book *Molecules of Emotion*, Candace Pert provides startling and decisive answers to these and other challenging questions that scientists and philosophers have pondered for centuries.

Her pioneering research on how the chemicals inside our bodies form a dynamic information network, linking mind and body, is not only provocative, it is revolutionary. By establishing the biomolecular basis for our emotions and explaining these new scientific developments in a clear and accessible way, Pert empowers us to understand ourselves, our feelings, and the connection between our minds and our bodies -- body-minds -- in ways we could never possibly have imagined before.

Molecules of Emotion is a landmark work, full of insight and wisdom and possessing that rare power to change the way we see the world and ourselves.

Molecules of Emotion: The Science Behind Mind-Body Medicine Details

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Nancy says

Not only was this a friendly read, but I learned a lot about the Scientific community, the politics or the system, and how it works. When people ask me about this book, I find it hard to categorize. It's a little bit memoir, a little bit science and understanding of the human body, and a little bit personal philosophy on healing. Overall, it was both educational and uplifting and recommended to anyone who wants to explore more the connection between physiology and the mind.

Jack Elliott says

During her post doc studies, Pert discovered the keyhole in the brain that unlocks opiates and the man she was working under took the credit. It took awhile to get that straightened out but she finally was vindicated. She does a splendid job of explaining, in lay terms, how the mind and body are "one and the same" and do not function separately. Some fascinating science of the human mind and body. After this book she became involved in eastern spirituality and incorporated that with her brilliant scientific experience. If you're really interested in how the human body and mind function you will want to read this because she does an excellent job of writing to the lay reader.

Amberjean says

There's some very interesting stuff in this book. Theories, science history, yadda yadda. It truly is fascinating stuff...

But it's very much mired in the administrative and, ironically, emotional, details of how scientific research gets done. While this might be a fascinating window for some folks, since I work in the sciences, it was a little too much like my daily life to hold any interest for me, and it was certainly not in the scope of what I expected, which was a pop-science book about an interesting topic.

It turned out to be 1/3 about the topic, and 2/3 about the trajectory of the author's career and personal life as a woman in the sciences. The sciences were and are a tremendously tough place for women to work, but I felt the book focused more on those issues than on the science of how emotion happens. A more appropriate (if less titillating) title would be "A Short History of Psychoneuroimmunology."

Mayda Ochoa says

Molecules of emotions

A book written by a scientist, which is (was) also a woman, and a superb human being, who walked a long

road to be able to explain scientifically why she was the way she was, and how our emotions could predestine and predict our health and even our death. She had to fight for her knowledge in a world of men who took from her even her most precious scientific awards. This is a book, which will open your eyes to how our bodies and minds are parts of a higher existence.

Amity says

I really enjoyed this book because Candace Pert is a scientist who has developed the skill of sharing her discoveries and scientific pursuits with diverse audiences. There is a hefty dose of science - explaining the way the body and mind communicate and her work on neurotransmitter receptors in the brain and body, AIDS research and the politics of science and pharmacology and her struggles as a woman in a male dominated field (especially in the 70s & 80s.)

This is the first time I have read solid scientific research regarding the way our minds, spirits and bodies work together. I found it fascinating that the emotional information or psychosomatic network (in the form of emotional energy, hormone, neurotransmitters, etc within the body) correlates with the chakras, subtle energies & many ideas from holistic, eastern and traditional medicine (which I have found interesting, but needed this extra level of "proof" or evidence to pique my interest in continued study).

I especially like her discussion of self-honesty (p. 294) as a way to reduce stress and free emotional blockages. I also resonated with her discussion of focusing our intent and working through inner conflicts to increase our success and enjoyment of life.

Morgan Blackledge says

Oh man I really took a chance on this one.

And oh man do I feel like a dip.

Who ate skittles and farted?

My brain did when I bought this book.

It's by Candice Pert (1946 – 2013) an American neuroscientist and pharmacologist who discovered the opiate receptor, the cellular binding site for endorphins in the brain, as well as being a distinguished lead researcher at the NIMH, who published over 250 scientific articles on peptides and their receptors and the role of these neuropeptides in the immune system.

I decided to read the book despite her association with the new age movement and appearance in the film *What the #*\$! Do We Know!?* (a major black mark against anyone, regardless of their scientific accomplishments).

So I held my nose and did it. The first part of the book is a surprisingly lucid account of Pert's groundbreaking research, told in an autobiographical form that reads like part feminist critique of the old boy

network of research science circa 1970, and part confessional of a rather ruthless woman who got hers by all means necessary.

In other words, when she gets passed over or ripped off by a male colleague, she's righteous and indignant (and rightly so), and when she flat out rips off male colleagues, she's brawling with the boys and doing what it takes to be successful in science (and that's life so what ever).

In addition to being a fascinating and entertaining glimpse into the cutthroat world of bench science. The book is also an informative tour of affective neuroscience and endocrinology. If you're a fan of Robert Sapolsky's work you will dig some or most of the science Ms. Pert drops.

As I read the book, I found myself waiting for her to veer south of hard science and float some rainbow flavored new age doucery. But every time it looked like she was going off the rails, she made a reasonable, evidence based claim.

So I cautiously preceded despite the lingering, faint sound and smell of skittle colored farts! When would the other shoe drop. When would she fly off the rails on a crystal Pegasus?

It's like one of those scary movies that keeps tricking you into thinking the killer is about to jump out at the victim, and then it turns out to be the goofy roommate with a mask on, or a cat in the bushes. You're tension is relieved for a moment but you know what's going to happen, so you're right back on the edge of your seat waiting for the massacre, and then you let your guard down and PAPOW!

And so it goes, slowly but surely Dr. Perts apparent personality flaws seem to catch up to her, and she goes to science jail (i.e. she pulls a slow mo Lindsey Lohan and alienates her colleagues to the point that they no longer support her and shwoop. She's suddenly an outsider, misunderstood righteous victim who's down with the Depak Chopra, and from there its a full on crystal catastrophe, replete with Christian conversion and dream healing experiences.

Ewe it stinks like a men's room at a Dairy farm all the sudden! Pure gas! I'm as ashamed as if it were I who dealt it.

I'm fully aware that I like what the other reviewers hated about the book, and disliked what other reviews seem to be after, i.e. the so called "Mind Body" medicine stuff of Dr. Perts later career.

Side rant: the fact that people still say mind body any more is totally irritating, the mind is a property of the brain, and last time I checked, the brain is a part of the body. Saying mind body is like saying vista view, what a lovely view of the vista. Calling the mind "non-physical" is not even wrong. That's how lame the idea is. For that matter, calling anything "non-physical" is not even wrong.

Anyway.

Before you write me off as a total dick skeptic, no wait a minute, I kind of am a total dick skeptic so go ahead and write me off. But if you're still reading this, I want to say that I'm not your average total dick skeptic.

I teach psychology at a Buddhist University, I practice a mindfulness based psychotherapy modality as a mental health clinician, I have been meditating seriously for over 30 years. I have been doing Yoga for almost as long. I lived in India for a bit, meditated in a cave, the whole nine. But I also love science and I am

a total neuroscience dork. All I can say is, there is really interesting hard science exploring mindfulness and wellbeing. Don't waste your time with this shit if you're really interested in this subject.

Sandy says

Candance Pert was on the research team that discovered how neuropeptides function in the body. Neuropeptides are the receptors that join the brain, glands, and immune system in a network of communication between brain and body. This explains how we really do feel emotion in our gut and heart. Our emotions impact our immune system. It explained to me why essential oils actually do heal. I have quotes from the book on my website, www.myvibranthealth.net, under the Health Related Info menu.

Teresa TL Bruce says

I decided to review this book as I go through it so my impressions are fresh. Why? Because as I began I found myself over-analyzing my own response to the writing. So be warned, this will be the longest Goodreads review I have ever done by the time I am through with it.

The author began by introducing herself and all her credentials. It crossed over the line from autobiography to bragging, making me question why she needed to spend so many pages telling me of her brilliance. Makes me a bit skeptical...

[Later:] The 2nd and 3rd chapters have "hooked" me as the author relates the story of how (& why) she went about seeking to find proof of the opiate receptor (a cellular molecule with which certain drugs interact, leading to pain relief and altered consciousness). Her struggles to overcome the "good old boy" mentality and the competitive atmosphere in the scientific community of the 1970's has had me riveted. I am still struggling with some of the technical/scientific jargon, though she does try to explain it in lay terms.

[Chapters 4 and 5:] Still not seeing what I thought the book would be about, I am getting either mad or suspicious. Either the author is making up a lot of bitter accusations or she really got shafted by her 1970's/80's "alpha male" scientific colleagues. I must go read more!

[now in chapter 8:] Hmm. I never really thought before about how the body communicates on a cellular level, nor about how our emotions filter our sensory and memory processing.

[much, MUCH later!] Having FINALLY finished the book I can now say I found it enlightening, but with reservations. I usually do not take so long to finish a nonfiction work of this length! Sometimes the writing was compelling enough to keep me immersed in the pages, such as the fast-paced accounts of espionage-like laboratory drama. However, most portions were too easy for me to set aside. The text shifts abruptly between present and past tenses while jumping back and forth from scientific minutiae to lecture hall monologue to panel discussion dialogues. Other portions come across as a memoir-oriented autobiography of the author's achievements and struggles within the highly politicized scientific community.

While I agree with the author's premise that the body and mind are more inseparable in function than most of mainstream medicine acknowledges, I found some of her ideas a little too far "out there" for my taste.

Two quotations from the book stood out to me:

(from page 222) "...absence of proof is not proof of absence."

(from page 306, wherein the author quotes the words of Dr. Brian Luke Seaward) "The body becomes the battlefield for the war games of the mind. All the unresolved thoughts and emotions, the negativity we hold on to, shows up in the body and makes us sick."

Sarah says

I had to read this for one of my classes. It was a fascinating read. If you are interested in why alternative medicine works, you will enjoy this book.

In this book, Pert shows how the mind and the body are not separate as they have been thought to be in science for so long. Pert uses her own life story to illustrate her scientific findings and gives recommendations for how her findings can affect the lives of her readers.

At the end of her book, Pert gives recommendations for a healthy bodymind: 1) become conscious, 2) access your psychosomatic network, 3) tap into your dreams, 4) get in touch with your body, 5) reduce stress, 6) exercise, 7) eat wisely, and 8) avoid substance abuse.

Franz says

Excellent account of the politics and egos and one-upmanship involved in big science, in this case molecular biology. Author is a scientist deeply involved in the discovery of the peptides that influence emotions a couple decades ago. She tells the story of the hard work and good luck necessary to find these elusive molecules, the challenge of being a woman in a field dominated by alpha males, and her own personal journey from a hard core materialist to exploring the connections between the mind and the body. Well written for us lay people.

Zeke says

This is a really interesting story of the struggle that women go through in the scientific community. But really, you're not a superhero. And your writing is imprecise. And you contradict yourself. I read the whole thing, but was really frustrated along the way.

Grace says

The title of this book is misleading. This book is not about the molecules of emotion or explaining why you feel the way you feel. It is the outlet for author, scientist, and conference speaker Candace Pert chose to share her personal and professional history, toot her own horn so to speak, and educate the average person on the new paradigm in scientific research that promotes a holistic approach concerning mind, body, and soul. The

way Pert makes it sound, she is spearheading the new paradigm movement by being the token scientist to lend her extensive research expertise. I just couldn't stop asking myself, "But what about the molecules of emotion? When is she going to talk about feelings?"

She did cover emotions and the role feelings play in sickness, recovery, and good health; however, it seemed as an afterthought or a bonus discovery as she detailed her research career in peptides and receptors in search of a cure for cancer (her father died of lung cancer in the early 1980s) and AIDS. She also used the book as a platform to discuss the male chauvinism, intense competition, the failure of science to recognize new discoveries, and the bureaucracy of a system that should be helping people live healthier happy lives instead of bolstering up the egos of men in power.

Even though I felt grossly mislead by the title, I couldn't help but get caught up in the author's narrative. Her many years of science writing (the boring passive voice) did not negatively impact this playful yet straight forward narrative that was easy to understand by someone who is not on the science field. She broke down her research and provided easy to understand examples without talking down to the reader. This is key for any science book targeted for a general mainstream audience. If you are interested in learning of one particular scientist's journey through science between the 1970's and the 1990's whose research spanned cancer and HIV, then this is the book for you. It won't disappoint. If you are interested in the science behind either of these diseases, then this is the book for you. If you want to be beat over the head with holistic adages like eating organic food and not doing drugs or drinking alcohol, the last chapter is definitely for you. This is where the book became annoying and lost some of its credibility with me. It could also stem from the fact that the book was written well over a decade ago and her earth-shattering advice is common knowledge for almost all Americans at this point.

Overall, I could only give this book two stars. I would have given it three or four if it actually focused on emotions.

Carol Manglos says

The oft-implied "mind-body" connection finds a pinnacle in this volume. Candace Pert started off her career with a bang, being the first scientist to isolate what we now commonly call pain receptors in the human body. This book basically walks you through her experience into her own personal, somewhat pseudo-scientific study of a direct link between human emotions and biological function. This is required reading for a course I'm taking, not something I pick up on preference, but I thoroughly enjoyed the book, even if I may have felt Dr. Pert might take her conclusions a bit far sometimes: She is heading into the unknown, so she may in fact, when the chips are all cashed in, be right again. This would be a great book for medical students who like the idea of a more holistic approach to medicine.

Rebecca Bruce says

I loved this book! What an eye-opening experience!

Candace Pert, PhD discovered the opiate receptor back in the 70's. Her discovery led to the making of SSRI drugs and all kinds of mood-altering substances that she warns against. Her book describes how your body is your subconscious mind, your health is a product of how you think about yourself. Taking many of the

drugs on the market today alter the bodies chemistry, but that in a way that can be sustained. Pert give advice on how to actually change your molecular functioning so that pharmaceuticals are no longer needed.

Pert gives a scientific explanation of the biomolecular basis of for our emotions and also the everyday ways that one can promote health in themselves. The book is an inspiration for exploring the body-mind connection and empowering one in their quest for health and happiness.

Rivka Levy says

This was the first book that helped me to start connect the dots, energy-medicine wise, that the body is just a 'mirror' for the soul.

Pert's assertion that the body is actual the subconscious mind made flesh completely blew me away.

She also lived a very interesting life, and wrote this book with a lot of passion (and occasional melancholy) making it the first scientific page-turner I ever came across.

Brilliant book, and highly recommended for people who want an introduction to a more holistic way of viewing their health and happiness, with a scientific stamp of approval from a bona fide PhD.
